

In the claims:

1 1. In a packet-based communication system having a first set of media gateways and
2 at least a second set of media gateways, and the packet-based communication system having a
3 first control device at least selectably coupled to the media gateways of the first set and the
4 second set and at least a second control device also at least selectably coupled to the media
5 gateways of the first set and the second set, the first control device and the second control device
6 selectably operable to provide session control of communications effectuated by way of
7 individual ones of the media gateways, an improvement of apparatus for facilitating selection at
8 least of which of the first and second control devices are operable during a selected period, to
9 provide the session control of communication to selected ones of the media gateways of the first
10 and at least second sets, said apparatus comprising:

1 a determiner coupled to receive indications of communication indicia selected to
2 at least communications to be effectuated by way of individual ones of the media gateways, said
3 determiner for determining, responsive thereto, which of the first and at least second control
4 devices are to provide the session control of the communications to the selected ones of the
5 media gateways.

1 2. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a control signal generator coupled to
2 said determiner to receive indications of determinations made by said determiner and coupled to
3 the first and second control device, said control signal generator operable responsive to the
4 indications of the determinations made by said determiner, for generating control signals
5 instructing the first and second control devices whether to provide the session control for
6 individual ones of the media gateways.

1 3. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said determiner is further coupled to receive
2 indicia representative of anticipated session control requirements of the individual ones of the
3 media gateways and wherein determinations made by said determiner are further responsive to
4 the indicia representative of the anticipated session control requirements.

1 4. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said determiner is further coupled to receive
2 indicia representative of an operability status of the first control device and indicia representative
3 of an operability status of the second control device and wherein determinations made by said
4 determiner are further responsive to indicia representative of the operability status of the first and
5 second control devices, respectively.

1 5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein determinations made by said determiner are
2 made pursuant to load balancing calculations for balancing, at a selected ratio, session control
3 functions to be provided by the first and second control devices, respectively.

1 6. The apparatus of claim 5 wherein the selected ratio of load balancing between the
2 first and second control devices comprises a substantially one-to-one ratio.

1 7. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the first control device comprises a first
2 softswitch and the second control device comprises a second softswitch, said determiner for
3 allocating session control operations for performing session control of the selected ones of the
4 media gateways to the first and second control devices pursuant to a session control allocation
5 scheme and responsive to the indications of the communication indicia.

1 8. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein at least part of said determiner is embodied at
2 least at one of the first softswitch and the second softswitch.

1 9. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the communication system further comprises a
2 signaling hub forming a message router and wherein at least a part of said determiner is
3 embodied at the signaling hub.

1 10. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the communication system comprises an SS7
2 network as a portion thereof, wherein the signaling hub comprises a Signal Transfer Point (STP),
3 and wherein the at least the part of said determiner is embodied at the Signal Transfer Point.

1 11. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the communication system comprises a proxy
2 device positioned separate from, and coupled to, the first and at least second control devices and
3 wherein at least a part of said determiner is embodied at the proxy device.

1 12. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein the proxy device comprises a homing proxy
2 and wherein said determiner is embodied at the homing proxy.

1 13. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the at least the second set of media gateways
2 comprises the second set of media gateways and at least a third set of media gateways, wherein
3 the at least the second control device comprises the second control device and at least a third
4 control device, and wherein said determiner determines which of the first, second and at least

5 third control devices, respectively, and in what allocation manner, are to provide the session
6 control of the communications.

1 14. The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the first set, the second set, and the third set
2 form independent sets.

1 15. In a method of communicating in a packet-based communication system having a
2 first set of media gateways and at least a second set of media gateways, and the packet-based
3 communication system having a first control device at least selectably coupled to the media
4 gateways of the first set and the second set and at least a second control device also at least
5 selectably coupled to the media gateways of the first set and the second set, the first control
6 device and the second control device selectably operable to provide session control of
7 communications effectuated by way of individual ones of the media gateways, an improvement
8 of a method for facilitating selection of which of the first and second control devices, are
9 operable during a selected period, to provide the session control of communication to selected
10 ones of the media gateways of the first and at least second sets, said method comprising:

1 detecting indications of communication indicia related to at least communications
2 to be effectuated by way of individual ones of the media gateways; and

3 determining, responsive to the indications detecting during said operation of
4 detecting, which of the first and at least second control devices are to provide the session control
5 of the communications to the selected ones of the media gateways.

1 16. The method of claim 15 further comprising the operation of:
2 generating control signals instructing the first and at least second control devices
3 whether to provide the session control for individual ones of the media gateways.

1 17. The method of claim 15 wherein determinations made during said operation of
2 determining are made responsive to a load balancing calculation by which to balance, at a

3 selected ratio, session control functions to be provided by the first and second control devices,
4 respectively.

1 18. The method of claim 15 wherein the indications of the communication indicia
2 detected during said operation of detecting comprise indicia representative of anticipated session
3 control requirements of the individual ones of the media gateways.

1 19. The method of claim 15 wherein the indications of the communication indicia
2 detected during said operation of detecting comprise indicia representative of an operability
3 status of the first control device and indicia representative of an operability status of the at least
4 the second control device.

1 20. The method of claim 15 wherein the indications of the communication indicia
2 detected during said operation of detecting comprise indicia representative of existing session
3 control requirements of the individual ones of the media gateways.